



Happy and relaxed: Theresa May and husband Philip hold hands on The One Show last night

DENIS Thatcher with a generous hooter but without the cigs and the ginny whiff of danger. Philip May, husband of Herself, was subjected to telly torture last night – a live interview with the missus on The One Show.

'Meet the Mays!' yelled the show's hearty presenters. Happiness was plainly going to be compulsory for the next half-hour.

Mr May came across as clever, sober, a decent egg but maybe a little embarrassed by the fizzy questions. No one could blame him for that. The whole encounter was like something off Blind Date or The Generation Game.

Was 59-year-old Mr May – an 'investment relationship manager', whatever that is – possibly a touch wooden? If you insist. But that was to his credit. You don't want to be too gushy on these things.

In his blue jacket and blue gingham shirt, sans tie, he came across as a decent, proud husband, an attractively classless middle-class guy completely unfazed about playing consort to his prime minister wife.

He was asked: Did the red box make it into their marital bedroom? The presenters did not explain that a red box is a ministerial briefcase. Mr May replied calmly that 'No, I don't think it has ever made an appearance in the bedroom'. But could the same be said of his Superman outfit?

What was most noticeable was

how Theresa relaxed in his presence. She looked quite different from her normal, taut interview persona. Her eyes seemed rounder, her body language looser and happier than normal.

She didn't stare at the interviewers suspiciously as though they were trying to sell her filthy postcards, as she often does. Presenters Alex Jones and Matt Baker, not yet in the Paxman league of political-interviewing, wanted to know what had the young Philip

thought when he first saw Theresa 38 years or so ago when they were students at Oxford? Nudge nudge. Phwoarr. Go on, Phil, give us the dirt.

Mr May, blinking a little behind his Harold Lloyd spectacles, replied that he had thought, 'What a lovely girl - and she still is. It was love at first sight.' Pause. 'And likewise,' he added, giving Theresa a verbal nudge. Oh yes, she said hurriedly. Yes, she had fancied the pants off him from the start.

Tinkling, coy laughter.

Mr May has until now been seen but not heard. He has been as low-profile as the wife of Lieutenant Columbo. He had plainly been told to keep saying what a 'privilege' it was for his beloved to be PM – he said so three or four times.

She did most of the talking and he nodded beautifully. He has become good at that over the years. There was a clip of him speaking at a Tory party confer-

ence in the 1980s – he was a dashing devil, and possibly still is.

THE One Show duo wanted to know if he had been envious of her going into politics instead of him. He insisted not.

Political spin was not entirely absent. Mrs May, asked if her election campaign so far was too presidential, punched in a couple of quick 'strong and stables' (her now notorious slogan). When she was asked about her childhood she said that it had been very happy. 'Stable', even. She's incorrigible!

There was some mundane stuff about her collection of cookery books and his own love of, er, jackets and ties. This was small talk on a Tory association wine and cheese party level.

More touching: a tale of how 'fake news' had once put it about that she was pregnant. Philip's mum had got all excited. The rumour was false.

Alex wanted to know when Theresa first mentioned any ambition to be PM. A small gaffe here: he said it had been when she became well established in the shadow cabinet. That was possibly as early as 2001 or so. The naughty plotter!

Overall verdict: mission survived. They came across as unpretentious, genuinely fond of one another and, above all, normal.

She'd fancied the pants off him... cue coy laughter



Quentin Letts

Watches Phil and Theresa on The One Show